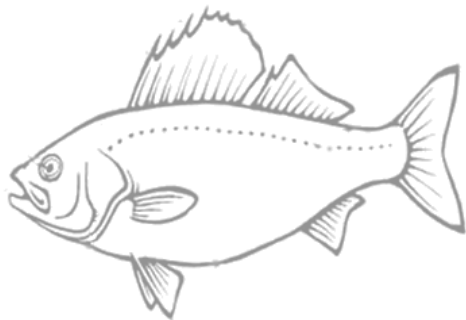
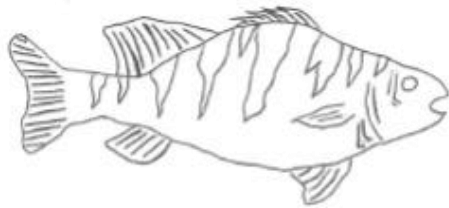
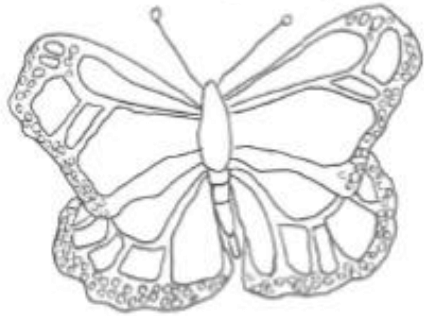


Color This Picture!!

We ♥ the Buffalo River!!



Erie County Natural Habitat Parks Field Guide



*Look inside for information, pictures,
games and activities!*

This Field Guide Belongs To:



Look for these green boxes to find the 7 scrambled words hidden throughout this book! Go to www.erie.gov/parks to submit your answers and win a prize!

Erie County Commissioner of Parks: Troy Schinzel

Edward A. Rath County Office Building
95 Franklin Street, Rm 1260
Buffalo, New York 14202

Wildlife Illustrations by Claudia Rosen

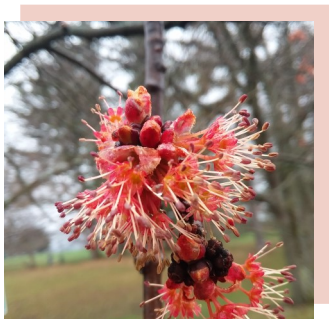
What else might you see at Thomas F. Higgins?



Northern Red Oak

Red Maple

Acer rubrum



Description: *Opposite branching pattern and bright red autumn leaves can help to distinguish this common hardwood tree.

Habitat: One of the most abundant and widespread trees in Western New York. Typically appears in younger forests along with sugar maples, beeches and oaks.

***Opposite branching pattern:** Side branches on the trunk of a tree grow across from each other rather than alternating as they move up the trunk.



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How to use this field guide

Inside this field guide you will find descriptions of all four Erie County Natural Habitat Parks, activities to connect with the natural habitat at each park, and descriptions of some of the plants and animals that you can find there!

Sample Species Page

American Crow

Corvus brachyrhynchos

Common Name

Scientific Name

Picture



Unscramble the Letters

Description
Habitat
Did You Know?

1. _ _ _ _ _

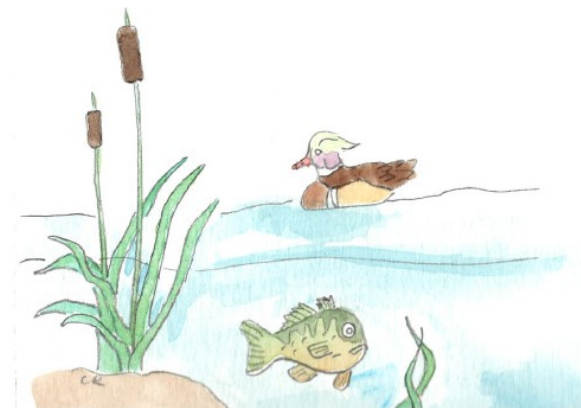
Wood Duck

Aix sponsa



Description: Brightly colored males with a distinctive green head and bright red eyes. Females are much duller, mostly gray and brown. Usually smaller than mallard ducks.

Habitat: Wooded areas near water. Wood ducks nest in abandoned woodpecker holes but will also use man-made nest boxes!



Red Fox

Vulpes vulpes



Description: Rusty red fur on back with white fur in its ears and underneath its chin and underside. Red fox have a long, bushy tail with a white tip and black feet.

Habitat: Brushy and forested areas, farm fields. Primarily nocturnal. Red fox have been increasingly successful surviving in or near urban environments, like the Erie County Natural Habitat Parks!

7. A baby fox is called a _____. (IKT)
After a fox is born it will spend up to 7 months with its parents!

Introduction

Erie County is fortunate to have four natural habitat “pocket parks” located in the city of Buffalo. Each habitat park is unique in its setting, providing a natural sanctuary for native plants and animals to thrive among urban surroundings. The parks are situated along the Buffalo River, which is considered to be a contaminated water body, or “*Area of Concern*” (AOC). The river has undergone extensive cleanup over the last several years. As part of the recovery effort, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has invested millions of dollars in shoreline and habitat restoration to revive a healthy ecosystem.



Photo credit: K. Lachut

Citizen Science



Become a citizen scientist and help us record the species of plants and animals that live in the Erie County Natural Habitat Parks!

Submit pictures and observations of the species you observe while visiting the Natural Habitat Parks to [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org)



When you add an observation to iNaturalist from one of the Erie County Natural Habitat Parks, they will automatically be added to one of these projects:

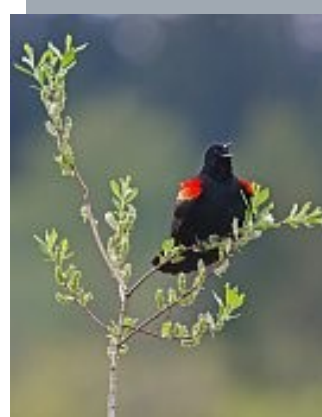
Times Beach Nature Preserve Biota
Red Jacket Riverfront Natural Habitat Park Biota
Seneca Bluffs Natural Habitat Park Biota
Thomas F. Higgins Riverfront Park Biota

Download the “iNaturalist” app on your smart phone or visit one of your Erie County libraries for computer and internet access!



Red-winged Blackbird

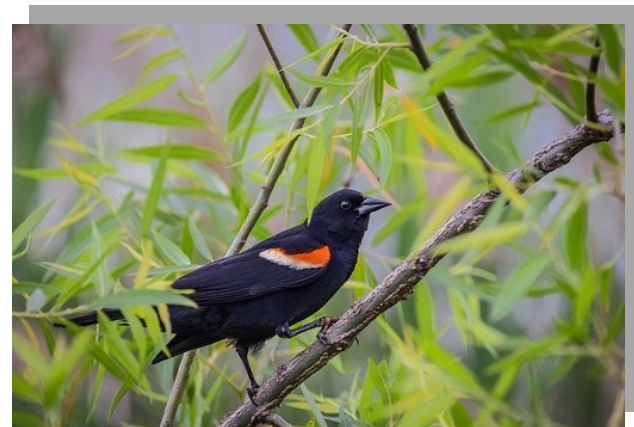
Agelaius phoeniceus



Description: Males are black with a bright red and gold wing patch. They are one of the first birds to return to New York from their Southern migration. Their loud, characteristic call of “conk-a-ree” is a well-known sign of spring!

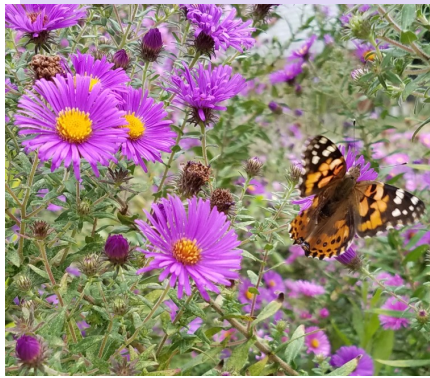
Habitat: Wetlands and grasslands.

Did You Know? Red-winged blackbirds are related to Baltimore orioles, meadowlarks and bobolinks.



New England Aster

Symphyotrichum novae-angliae



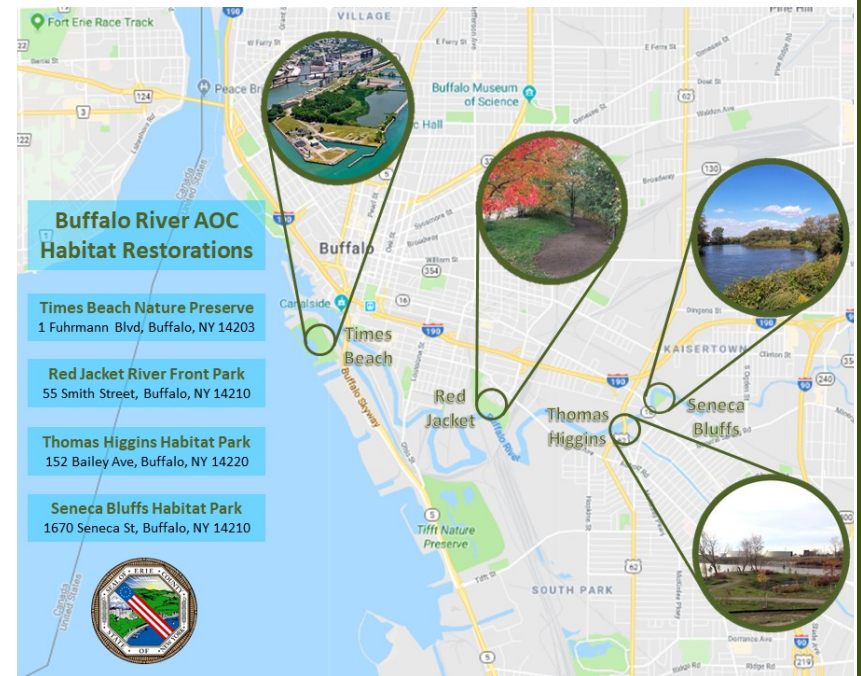
Description: This bright purple, pink or white wildflower can grow up to 7 feet tall. It blooms from late July until October.

Habitat: Wetlands and open fields. Commonly found co-occurring with shrubs and moist soils.

Pollinators: Birds and insects like bees and butterflies spread pollen from flower to flower which allow them to produce seeds for future growth.



Use this map to help you find your way!



What is a *Habitat*?

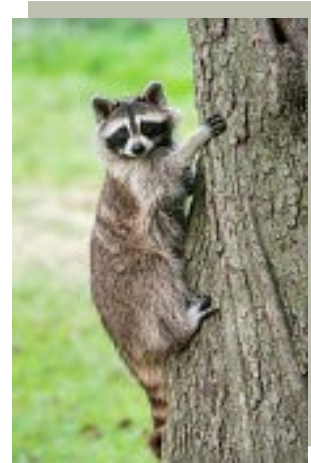
The Erie County Natural Habitat Parks protect a variety of habitats along the Buffalo River! A habitat is an organism's natural home or environment. Here are some examples.

- ♦ *Shoreline*: Home to semi-aquatic animals like frogs and turtles! The roots of plants along the shoreline also help to reduce soil erosion.
- ♦ *Wetlands*: Native marsh plants like cattails can help filter out pollutants and bacteria from the water before it flows into the Buffalo River!
- ♦ *Upland forest*: Trees like Eastern cottonwood and American basswood provide habitat for birds and mammals.
- ♦ *Aquatic*: Water bodies support a variety of plants and animals including turtles, fish and even some birds like ducks and loons.



Raccoon

Procyon lotor



Description: Easily recognizable black “mask” and ringed pattern on a bushy tail. Long thick fur gives raccoons a typical gray-brown color with variations ranging from sienna to silver.










Habitat: Sparsely wooded areas, stream banks and lake shores. Aquatic animals such as amphibians and crustaceans are an important part of a raccoon's diet.

6. Raccoons are active at night and spend most of the day sleeping. This means they are _____!
(TOCUANRLN)

Animal Count

Count the number of animals that you see at Thomas F. Higgins Riverfront Park. How many of them are mammals? Remember that insects are animals and don't forget to include humans!

Bird Bingo

 Mallard	 Black-capped Chickadee	 Great Blue Heron
 Blue Jay	 Ring-billed Gull	 American Robin
 Tufted Titmouse	 Cardinal	 Red-tailed Hawk

Grab a friend and play bird bingo! As you explore your Natural Habitat Parks, check off the birds that you see! When you have checked off three in a row— you win!

Times Beach Nature Preserve

11 Fuhrmann Boulevard, Buffalo, NY 14203



Times Beach Nature Preserve is one of the most well-known Erie County Natural Habitat Parks. It's a great spot for migrating birds to stop over and rest because it is located along the globally significant Great Lakes flyway. Over 240 species of birds have been recorded visiting here! Whether down in the shrubs or up high in the Eastern cottonwood trees, there is almost always an animal to be found. With trails and boardwalks meandering through woods and along the Lake Erie shoreline, it is a favorite place of birders and wildlife enthusiasts. Just remember not to feed the animals!

Thomas F. Higgins Natural Habitat Park

152 Bailey Ave, Buffalo, NY 14220



Once called Bailey Peninsula Natural Habitat Park, Thomas F. Higgins Natural Habitat Park has seen many changes recently! Stop by and explore the new bridge, with excellent views of the Buffalo River and Cazenovia Creek. Enjoy the native plants that have been planted along the trail. Bring a fishing pole and cast off the point of the peninsula. The Buffalo River has not yet been delisted as an area of concern so be sure to throw back what you catch. The fish have pollution inside of them making them unsafe to eat.

What else might you see at Seneca Bluffs?



New York Fern



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Turtle Time

Imagine you are a turtle living at Times Beach Nature Preserve. Where would you go during the winter? Draw a picture!

Check out the painted turtle on page 15 to see how they handle the cold weather!

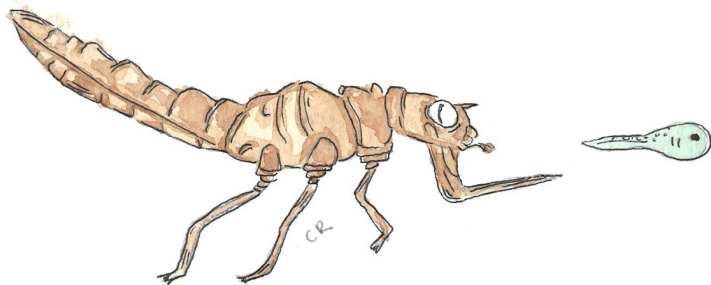
Blue Dasher Dragonfly

Pachydiplax longipennis



Description: A member of the skimmer family, the males of this species have a striking blue abdomen and bright green eyes.

Habitat: Still, calm bodies of water. Adults spend the night roosting in trees.



1. Dragonflies spend most of their life in the water as an aquatic _____! (YNHPM)
During this life stage they have jaws that can extend to help them catch prey like tadpoles and small fish!

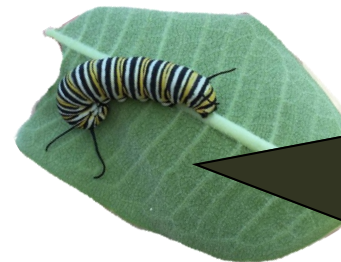
Monarch

Danaus plexippus



Description: Bright orange and black adult butterfly. Caterpillar has black, yellow and white stripes.

Habitat: Monarch caterpillars exclusively eat Milkweed plants. You will find these plants near marshes and wetlands, in fields and in gardens. Look on the underside of the large leaves in the summer to find a caterpillar eating away!



Monarch Caterpillar says:
"Milkweed contains a toxin called glycoside. I am one of the few animals that can digest it. When I do, I myself become toxic, which helps deter predators. My bright orange color as an adult butterfly is a warning to other animals saying, "Don't eat me!"

Indian Grass

Sorghastrum nutans



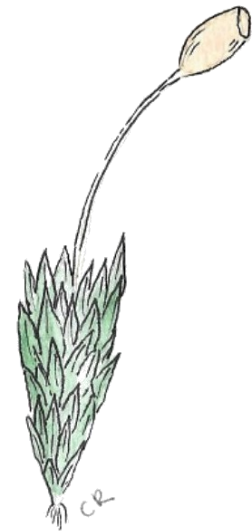
Description: Perennial grass

Habitat: Indian grass is a native species that was planted at Seneca Bluffs Natural Habitat Park as a part of extensive habitat restoration! This grass can be found along stream banks.



Moss

Bryophyta Sp.



Description: You might think that all moss looks the same, but get a little closer and you'll notice that there is an incredible variety! In general, mosses are green plants that grow close to the ground. Small *sporophytes can sometimes be seen standing above the green mat of leaves.

Habitat: Moss needs water in order to live. It can grow on rocks, decaying trees, bare soil or living tree bark. Knowing where a moss is growing can help you identify the species!

Did You Know? The seeds of a moss are located in the *sporophyte. They are extremely tiny and blown to new places by the wind!

Canada Goldenrod

Solidago canadensis



Description: This goldenrod can reach heights of up to five feet! The bright yellow flowers are arranged on arched branches. Peak flowering occurs from August until November.

Habitat: Meadows, fields and recently disturbed areas.

2. You can find these mysterious growths on many different kinds of plants, but goldenrod is well known for them! There is a specific fly that lives inside. Hint: Rhymes with ball!

_____ (LGLA)



Red-bellied Woodpecker

Melanerpes carolinus



Description: Medium sized woodpecker with black and white barring on back. Males have a bright red crown and *nape while females just have a bright red crown.

Habitat: Common in both young and old growth forests. Often venture into suburban areas to feed at suet feeders!

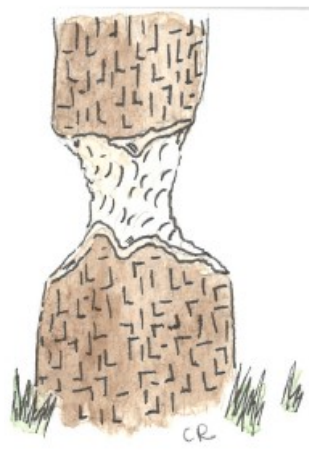
***Nape:** the back of your neck



Red-bellied Woodpecker says: "In addition to insects, I love to eat Virginia Creeper berries! I look for their bright colors in the fall!"

Beaver

Castor canadensis



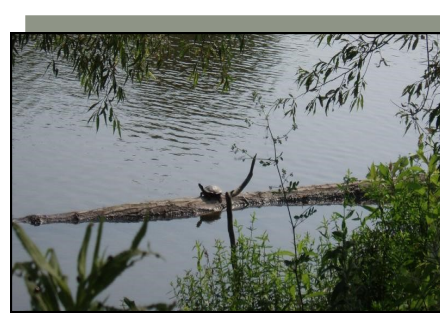
Description: Silky brown fur, wide, flat tail and large front teeth.

Habitat: Beavers create their own environments by constructing dams and lodges from felled trees or by digging dens in the banks of rivers!

Did you know? Beavers need to constantly chew on bark and wood in order to keep their ever-growing teeth from getting too long!

Painted Turtle

Chrysemys picta



Description: A turtle 4 -7" in length that is named for its brightly colored shell and yellow stripes along the side of its head.

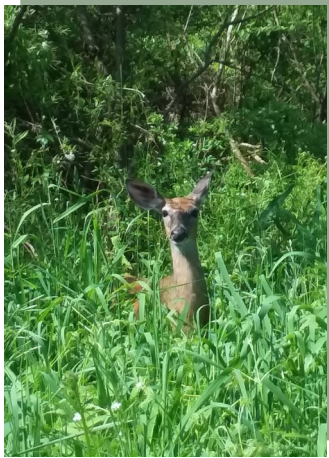
Habitat: Lakes, ponds, slow-moving streams and rivers. Painted turtles are the most common turtle in New York!



Turtle says: "Brrrr..... In the winter it is too cold for us cold-blooded critters to stay active! We have to burrow into the mud and muck underneath the water. We can even slow down our heart rate as we wait for warmer weather!"

White-tailed Deer

Odocoileus virginianus



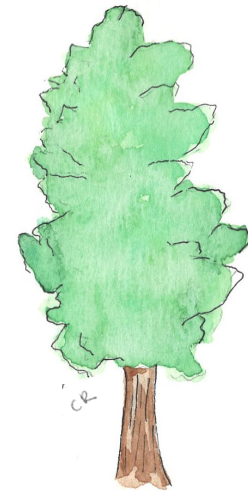
Description: A white-tailed deer's fur ranges from reddish brown to gray depending on the season, with white fur along the nose and beneath its tail. Males have antlers and shed them annually from January to March. They regrow again in the spring.

Habitat: White-tailed Deer prefer edge habitat along forests. Many factors have led to rapidly increasing numbers of white-tailed deer in Western New York. Although deer populations are high remember not to feed them!

3. A male deer has antlers and is called a _____.! (CBKU)

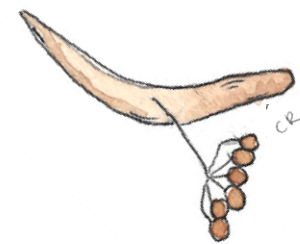
American Basswood

Tilia americana



Description: Heart-shaped, alternately arranged leaves. Has distinct fruit that are attached to a modified leaf.

Habitat: Stream banks, moist soils.



The Habitat Parks Team says: "Native Americans once called the Buffalo Creek "do-syo-wa", meaning "the place of the basswoods."

Common Greenshield Lichen

Flavoparmelia caperata



Description: Lichen are a combination of a *photosynthesizer and a fungus. The common green shield lichen is foliose, meaning it has a rough texture. It is green and can grow to almost a half an inch wide!

Habitat: Grows on the bark of trees and on the surface of rock. Lichen need good air quality in order to survive, so seeing them can be an indicator of a healthy environment!

***Photosynthesizer:** a living object that gets its energy from the sun



Snowy Owl

Bubo scandiacus



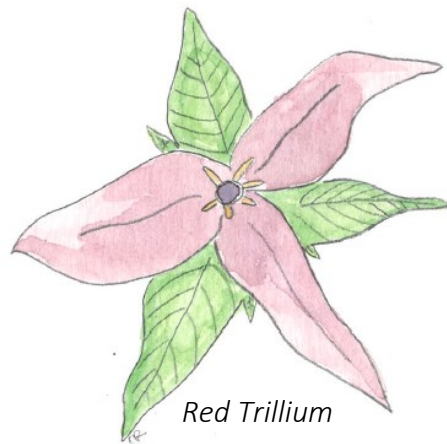
Snowy Owl says: "Hoo! Hoo! I am unlike other owls because I am not nocturnal! I'm diurnal Hoo! This means that I hunt and am active during the day."

Description: A large, white owl that migrates to Western New York from its Arctic habitat in the winter. Females and younger owls have dark black barring along wings and back with distinctive yellow eyes.

Habitat: Arctic species that nests in the Northern-most reaches of North America in the summer. Snowy owls visit New York during *irruption years and are typically found in wide, open areas, especially along the Lake Erie shore.

***Irruption:** a sudden increase in a natural population usually due to a favorable environment.

What else might you see at Times Beach?



Red Trillium

Leaf Art



Find some fallen leaves at Seneca Bluffs! Place the leaves directly under this page. Using a crayon, gently color over top of the paper and leaf. Watch your picture appear! How is each one different?

Seneca Bluffs Natural Habitat Park

1670 Seneca St, Buffalo, NY 14210



Seneca Bluffs has come a long way! Because this 20 acre park contains a shoreline floodplain, it helps to manage changes in the water level of the Buffalo River. It is also a habitat restoration site for the Buffalo River Area of Concern. Today Seneca Bluffs is the site of classes, cleanups and other community events!

5. At Seneca Bluffs there is an informational panel at the entrance to the park near the parking lot! Read the panel. What is it about?

(SSTECEOMY) (SORTEIRNAOT)

Birds You Can See at Times Beach

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*
 Bay-breasted/Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga castanea/striata*
 Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea*
 Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*
 Black-throated Blue Warbler *Setophaga caerulescens*
 Black-throated Green Warbler *Setophaga virens*
 Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca*
 Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata*
 Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*
 Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*
 Chestnut-sided Warbler *Setophaga pensylvanica*
 Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*
 Hooded Warbler *Setophaga citrina*
 Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia*
 Mourning Warbler *Geothlypis philadelphia*
 Nashville Warbler *Oreothlypis ruficapilla*
 Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*
 Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*
 Orange-crowned Warbler *Oreothlypis celata*
 Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*
 Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum*
 Pine Warbler *Setophaga pinus*
 Prairie Warbler *Setophaga discolor*
 Tennessee Warbler *Oreothlypis peregrina*
 Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*
 Worm-eating Warbler *Helminthos vermivorum*
 Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata*
 Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia*

Red Jacket Natural Habitat Park

20 Smith St, Buffalo, NY 14210



Red Jacket Natural Habitat Park is located along the Buffalo River at the foot of Smith Street. As a habitat restoration site for the Buffalo River Area of Concern, Red Jacket Park has had several projects aimed at upgrading the habitat for both wildlife and human use. The addition of gravel trails, a kayak launch and a fishing area have made this park more accessible. To improve the habitat for fish and wildlife the shoreline has been restored by returning natural contours, removing invasive plants and replacing them with native species! Upland forest plantings provide habitat for wildlife like birds and small mammals. The wetland provides home to reptiles and amphibians like turtles and frogs.

Birds You Can See at Red Jacket

Waterfowl

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*
Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*
Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*

Grebes

Horned Grebe *Podiceps auratus*

Pigeons and Doves

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*
Mourning Dove *Zenaidura macroura*

Cuckoos

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*

Swifts

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*

Shorebirds

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferous*

Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*
Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*
Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Cormorants and Anhingas

Double-crested
Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Hérons, Ibises, and Allies

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*
Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

Vultures, Hawks, and Allies

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*
Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*
Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Kingfishers

Belted Kingfisher *Megasceryle alcyon*

Woodpeckers

Yellow-bellied
Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*
Downy Woodpecker *Dryobates pubescens*
Hairy Woodpecker *Dryobates villosus*
Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*

Falcons and Caracaras

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

Tyrant Flycatchers: Pewees, Kingbirds, and Allies

Alder/Willow Flycatcher (Traill's Flycatcher) *Empidonax alnorum/traillii*
Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*
Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

Vireos

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*

Jays, Magpies, Crows, and Ravens

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Martins and Swallows

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*



Great Blue Heron

Check out eBird.com for more information!

What else might you see at Red Jacket?



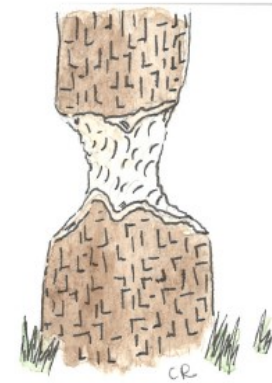
Weeping Willow



White-breasted Nuthatch

Tree-mendous Mystery

While you are exploring Red Jacket Riverfront Park, you may come across a trunk that looks like this:



What happened? Who do you think is the culprit? Draw a picture!

Flip to page 34 to learn more!

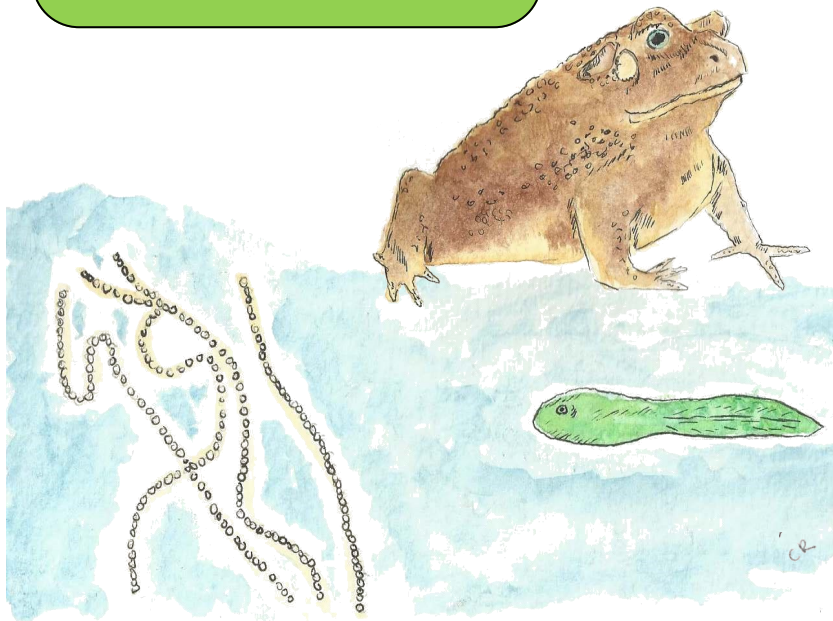
American Toad

Anaxyrus americanus

Description: Small, brown or gray amphibian. Its skin is covered in bumps and dark spots. Its eyes are brightly golden.

Habitat: Woodlands, ponds, lakes and grassy areas near water.

4. Many toads and frogs need _____ (RNVLA E) pools. They use these short lived bodies of water to breed and lay their eggs!



Narrow-leaf Cattail

Typha angustifolia



Description: Semi-aquatic perennial plant, meaning that it will come back year after year. Brown, fluffy “cat tail” shaped flowers at the upper end of stalks.

Habitat: Cattail lives in marshes and wetlands as an *obligate wetland plant species.

Did You Know the cattail:

- Comes from Europe
- Invasive to New York
- Has starchy roots that muskrats like to eat

***Obligate:** single function



Gem-studded Puffball

Lycoperdon perlatum



Description: The white or cream colored top of this mushroom is covered in bumps and spikes. Many compare them to jewels! When this mushroom is mature, it will release its spores when touched.

Habitat: Grows on the ground, often in clusters. It is widespread and found throughout North America.

Did You Know? Most of a mushroom can be found underground! Their roots, called mycelium (mai-see-lee-uhm), are spread throughout the soil and can even intermingle with tree roots. What you see above ground is called the “fruiting body” of the mushroom.

Eastern Cottonwood

Populus deltoides



Description: Fast-growing hardwood tree that can reach heights of up to 100 feet. Look for deeply grooved bark on a large trunk, *alternate leaves and fluffy cotton-like seeds that are dispersed by the wind in the early summer.

Habitat: Moist soils and upland forests.

***Alternate leaves:** There is 1 leaf at each section of the stem. The leaves alternate sides as they go up the stem.



Mink

Mustela vison



Description: Small weasel (mustelidae family) with glossy black fur and a white patch underneath its chin. Easily distinguished from a beaver by its small size and slender tail.

Habitat: Stream banks, lakeshores and wetlands including marshes and swamps.

Did You Know? The family mustelidae includes ferrets, martens, weasels, otters, and more. They are carnivores!



Hickory Tussock Moth

Lophocampa caryae

Description: The caterpillar is white with tufted white and black setae (bristles) along its body. Brown moth with white speckles throughout.



Habitat: Caterpillars can be seen from July until October. They feed primarily on the leaves of hickories but will also eat ashes and elms.



Hickory Tussock Moth Caterpillar says: "Be careful not to touch me! My bristles have tiny barbs that can cause skin rashes! They help me keep predators away."